

A. M. Grimes: Country Teacher and Itinerant Minister

By Berlin B. Chapman

IN Appalachia, as in most of America, ministers of the gospel operating from villages exercised great influence on populace, but few kept full records of experience and service. They were doers of the word, seldom scribes of it. Those who pursue history of ministry in West Virginia always will be indebted to Rev. Addison McLaughlin Grimes, a typical Methodist Episcopal preacher who kept a minute record from 1895-1920.

Grimes was licensed to preach at Fairview Methodist Church in Webster County. He served fifteen charges. He listed dates, addresses, names and dates of those whose marriage service he performed. Of those whose funerals he held, he cited text of scripture used. He delivered sermons, recording for same the date, text, subject, place and remarks. Moreover, he continued the record after retirement, and on his 100th birthday delivered a sermon in Fairmont.

Grimes' record is a valuable case study. To know well how he operated at the turn of the twentieth century is to know much about services of his colleagues in related denominations. Hence it is not only important to study the ministerial record, but to know much about the man who kept it.

He was born in Webster County, July 4, 1863, an event coinciding with the fourth and final day of the Battle of Gettysburg. He attended rural schools in terms of about four months. On July 21, 1869, Rev. T. S. Coulter baptized Grimes by sprinkling. In 1882-84 he attended the seminary later known as West Virginia Wesleyan College. Always a student, he largely was self-educated. He believed that the secret of scholarship is serious and prolonged self-effort. By 1891 he held a teacher's certificate, "Grade No. One," the highest awarded by Webster County, based on written examination. He taught eight terms of school in the county, each term being four months. Beginning in 1888, he kept for several years careful record of earnings and expenditures.

Teacher's Certificate.

It is hereby certified that D. M. Grimes is a person of good moral character, competent to teach and govern a common school, and has passed an examination in the following branches with the indicated grade:

ARITHMETIC	90	ALGEBRA	75	TOTAL PERCENTAGE	110
GEOMETRY	80	LOGIC	75	AVERAGE PER CENT.	75%
PHYSICS	80	ENGLISH	75	GRADE	70
CHEMISTRY	80	USE OF TEXT BOOKS	75	GRADE FOR TEACH. EX. EX.	
TELEGRAPHY AND TELEPHONE	100	Other	75		
TELETYPE	100	Other	75		

D. M. Grimes
 R. B. McLeary
 J. McLeary
 County, W. Va.

Oct 7 1891

ORIGINAL

Duplicate of this
Certificate filed
in my office this
14th day of Oct. 1891.

R. B. McLeary
Supt. S.C.

For L. G. Dish

You are drawn as
a Juror for Term of Court
at Court House.



A. M. Grimes

The county seat of Webster is Webster Springs, officially known as Addison, and it was named for Addison McLaughlin Grimes was named for this man. The first newspaper in the county was the "Mountain Echo." It appeared January 26, 1883, and consisted of eight pages 8 x 15 inches. In memoirs Grimes wrote: "I visited Addison the first time in March, 1883. To me it was wonderful to see Robert Townsend, Jr., with a step of his foot, print a page of the newspaper."

News media quoted Grimes: "I was gloriously converted on Abraham Lincoln's birthday, in 1884." Ten years later he was teaching school in the vicinity of Fairview Methodist Church, an institution of which he was a charter member. Dedication was September 9, 1894 and is described by Sampson N. Miller.

This was a great day for both old and young. It was the largest crowd ever to assemble at the church. People came from quite a distance in sleds, wagons, buggies, on horseback and many on foot. You talk about food, they certainly had it that day. Dedication was on one of the most beautiful autumn days I ever saw. Why the enthusiasm? Because the good people of the community had something to look forward to. No lad of ten would ever have forgotten that day.

In listing young men who went out from the church as ministers, Miller said: "First was A. M. Grimes who at the 3rd Quarterly Conference in May, 1895, was licensed to preach." The record of his 25 years is best read in the table of figures he kept. On its completion he wrote: "I am sorry in my heart that results are so meager. How humiliating these meager results! But for all this I must now go into judgment. The Blood! The Blood! Is all my plea! Enough to

No. 7		TEACHER'S CERTIFICATE.		Grade No. <u>Low</u>
THIS IS TO CERTIFY That <u>A. M. Grimes</u> is a person of good moral character, competent to teach and govern a common school, and has passed an examination in the following branches with the annexed results:				
Orthography	98	U. S. HISTORY	95	TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Reading	98	ARITHMETIC	95	ARTICLES AND ESSAYS
Penmanship	95	NEW SPELLING	95	LETTERS AND OTHER WRITING
Geography	95	NEW ARITHMETIC	95	SEE GRADES
Spelling	95	TEACHERS AND OTHER WRITING	100	
Orthography and Spelling by	100			
WRITING	100			
Deductible day of leave 1895 by <u>J. H. Grimes</u> President				
<u>Miller</u> County, W. Va. <u>J. H. Grimes</u>				

ORIGINAL

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

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Orthography and Spelling by	100			
WRITING	100			
Deductible day of leave 1895 by <u>J. H. Grimes</u> President				
<u>Miller</u> County, W. Va. <u>J. H. Grimes</u>				

EXAMPLAR

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Year	Perfect Communion	Union with the Church	Confessions	Marriages	Sum of	Sum of
1895-1901 - 7 years	234	15	3	2	408	1835
1901-1903 - 2 years	178	7	2	2	432	25
1903-1904 - 1 year	43	3	1	1	52	52
1904-1905 - 1 year	56	10	3	1	79	103
1905-1907 - 3 years	160	13	3	3	189	474
1907-1910 - 4 years	75	7	1	5	88	314
1910-1911 - 2 years	56	1	1	2	60	131
1911-1912 - 2 years	10	9	1	2	22	72
1912-1915 - 4 years	100	7	3	5	115	225
1915-1916 - 2 years	96	14	12	2	124	327
1916-1918 - 3 years	86	13	8	2	109	312
1918-1919 - 2 years	274	51	23	4	352	902
1919-1920 - 2 years	665	576	406	53	1785	5386
Grand Total						

The above figures show results of 25 years spent in the ministry from 1896 to 1920. I am sorry my very heart that the results are so small. How - multiplying these magnificent! of Mrs. Fanning, Oct. 14 - 1911 - 10:30 P.M. But for all this I will never go into judgment. At home C. G. Taylor, Dec. 20, 1895. The Blood! The Blood! Let all my plea.

bomb a man throughout all eternity. Friday, October 14, 1921, Home City, Tyler County, West Virginia."

In retirement of more than 40 years, Grimes would in some capacity serve the ministry. He had not finished his course, he would not say that he had fought a good fight, but he had kept the faith. In arithmetic of religion "meager results" always had a place. When the Lord was on earth He spoke of highways and hedges, of one lost sheep, and of possible attainment when "two or three" of his followers were gathered together. Certainly, no Methodist Conference would contend that the best ministerial service is always performed in the largest churches.

The circuit rider, like the country doctor, was devoted to his horse, almost to companionship. Grimes, equipped with saddlebags and leggings, was photographed on "Mat," his favorite mount, April 17, 1903. He wrote: " 'Mat' and I starting from Fayetteville to make our appointments at Clrsville and Bethel, a distance of 20 to 25 miles. Oh, the mud to Oak Hill." He noted "the beautiful, sunshiny morning".*

In 1911, Grimes and Miss America M. Miller were married and they became parents of children, Abraham, Sarah and Mary. Mary married Regis D. Connell, and it was with Connells in Fairmont that Grimes made his home after the death of his wife.

On June 8, 1962, the annual Methodist Conference was in session at Buckhannon. "The Informant," official publication, reported:

A highlight of each annual conference session is the Retired Ministers Banquet and the selection of a retired minister to be honored by possession of the Conference Cane. The cane has been passed among retired ministers since 1897. It usually is awarded to the oldest living minister or the minister with the greatest number of years of service.

The Rev. Addison M. Grimes, present cane-holder, is past 90 years of age. He enjoys good health and plans to go right on past the century mark. In the acceptance speech, when presented the cane, Brother Grimes spoke with vigor and enthusiasm. It was not difficult at all to see across the years and visualize circuit riders of another era as they evangelized the frontier settlements. Of such stock was Methodism born!

When Grimes became a centenarian the Fairmont press hailed him as the oldest citizen, and family and friends celebrated the occasion. He told a news reporter, "I am proud of the cane but, of course, I don't need it." He added a bit of philosophy: "Always be

busy and profitably employed. Idleness is the devil's workshop. If you are unhappy or down in the dumps, just do something nice and you will feel a whole lot better."

Under date of July 4, 1963, Grimes wrote: "My 100th birthday. Preached at Diamond Street Church to a full house (252). 'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found (Isaiah 55:6).' Never had finer freedom and liberty in speech. To God be all the glory." In July, Grimes delivered four sermons.

During the centennial year of West Virginia, 1963, a special program was held at Fairview Methodist Church at which the history of the institution was reviewed. Grimes participated in the program. A. F. Gregory reported: "More than 100 people were on the ground, made up of both present and former residents of the community, and ranging in age from 100 to mere babes in arms." "The Webster Echo" on September 25, 1963, carried a photo of charter members present. They were Grimes, Mrs. Nancy H. Hamrick and Calvin H. Brady. Grimes wrote: "It was a great experience to be present at homecoming, not soon to be forgotten."

On June 8, 1964, he sent Methodist Conference a message: "I appreciate the great honor of having the cane two years and gladly return it for someone else to enjoy." He died June 15, or 19 days before his 101 birthday.